

# **On the Justification of Cooperative Decisions in the Field of Knowledge**

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**ABSTRACT:** Discussed in this paper are certain methodological problems facing up social thinkers and mankind today in finding justification of cooperative decisions in the field of knowledge. Cooperative strategies rely on the social welfare function in order to find out values of individual utility functions – i.e. on the states of maximization of benefits or utilities vis-a-vis different individuals. Cooperative strategies rely on holism; and corporate strategies – on methodological individualism; the latter perceives of society as a sum of atomized individuals. According to holism „the general” is more important than the „individual”; it satisfies a ruling social interest. Knowledge is a communitarian social value as are also solidarity, cooperation and mutual assistance.

**KEYWORDS:** cooperative decisions, communitarian values, wealth of knowledge

Today, we are living in an imbalanced and insecure world. Global insecurity and global challenges, such as terrorism, regional conflicts and global economic and ecological crises, arise out of existing inequalities.

Abysmal imbalances exist in the sphere of knowledge and technological innovations. The social and economic inequalities dividing our world are prerequisites for the existence of lasting inequalities in the field of knowledge. At present, the most developed countries dominate in the spheres of high technologies and scientific innovations. Poor countries are completely deprived of access to the wealth of knowledge (scientific and technological alike). The large gaps between rich and poor countries in our days have their roots in developments in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the era of scientific

and industrial revolution. The first scientific revolution of the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries was the result of development of new machines. The so rapid scientific and technological progress in the world today stems from the appearance of innovations based on high-level knowledge. Hence, the existing inequalities in the sphere of knowledge and the unfair distribution of the wealth of knowledge are obstacles hampering a balanced development of the world; and its secure future is at stake.

The deepening of economic imbalance on our planet is a lasting result of the ongoing neoliberal globalization. This process is masterminded and streamlined by global financial and political elites of the world in the interest of the richest people.

Shaping of a knowledge-based society is a great project of the most developed countries and world organizations. It may become a successful alternative of the neoliberal globalization apace now, because it visualizes a rich society based on knowledge and up-to-date technologies. Knowledge is a communitarian value – it means that access of all humans to the wealth of the knowledge society could become a reality some day. Mankind should aim to secure for every human an opportunity to benefit from the existing scientific and technological progress at a reasonable price.

It could be said that mankind is now living through a deep-going crisis in the realization of universal values upheld by the knowledge society. As a strategic resource, knowledge is a subject of intensive world rivalry. The worldwide rivalry in science and innovation is far more intensive than that in the control over natural resources, such as fuel, energy and water, and the control over trade routes. Innovations in science and technology have become a strategic resource; which, however, divides – rather than unites and improves – the standards of people and countries in the world. The uneven distribution of products of knowledge and corporate ownership of them widens the gap between wealth and poverty and boosts up social and economic imbalance. This crisis could be overcome by means of application of cooperative political decisions. They could be initiated by world organizations and global civil society on the basis of development of a new consciousness of mankind.

This paper is an overview of specific methodological problems facing up social thinkers and mankind today in efforts to find out justification of the making of cooperative decisions in the field of knowledge. A political game theory can be used as a methodology of the

analysis below. Cooperative strategies rely on the social welfare function in their trying to find out values of individual utility functions – i.e. maximization of benefits or utilities vis-a-vis different individuals. Cooperative strategies rely on holism; corporate strategies rely on a methodological individualism. The latter perceives of society as a sum total of atomized individuals. According to holism „the general” is more important than the „individual”; it satisfies a ruling social interest. Knowledge itself is a communitarian social value, as are also solidarity, cooperation and mutual assistance.

Efforts to correlate them in an uncontroversial way come up against considerable logical and methodological difficulties, formally expressed in the existence of the so-called Paradox of Social Choice. It says that it is impossible to get to a maximization of the social welfare function on the basis of satisfaction of certain individual utility functions. When used corporate strategies lead to formation of coalitions and to their domination in the allocation of resources. These strategies can not find a stable social outcome living up to the variety of differing interests. They can not solve social problems and the problem of fair distribution of the wealth of knowledge. The application of these strategies to international relations and to distribution of wealth entails further growth of the power of the rich global elites and the powerful countries.

Cooperative strategies are based on a common interest of certain social group or society. Their decisions are oriented to the realization of this interest as a collective aim or common good. Cooperative strategies lead collective actors to seeking for realization of their preferences and to achieving maximization of the existing social utility function in a successful way on the basis of some communitarian values like solidarity, mutual aid and support.

One can note that the contradiction between the two types of strategies outlined corresponds to the existing discussion of liberalism and communitarianism in the contemporary philosophy of politics. They are not alternatives – the latter is a project of revision of some unfavorable consequences of the first one.

There exist three significant roads to the justification of collective decisions-making. The first of them is the one of the so-called „moral economy” and cosmopolitanism as a new form of this project in the Globalization era. The idea is based on the assumption that there are

communities based on institutions and practices developed in common interest. It is a „economy”, based on good, mutual aid and justice; one completely opposed to political economy. However, it can regulate only the relationships in relatively small social communities, under specific natural conditions. Now, how can one justify a transition from moral economy to a cosmopolitan morale? One of the most important methodological problems pertains to the justification the existence of a new global altruism or a universal code of cosmopolitan moral norms. It is of great importance for the present existing political practice, because cosmopolitanism “defines forms of political regulation and law-making that create powers, rights and constraints that transcends the claims of nation-states and have far-reaching consequences in principle. This is the domain between national and global law and regulation... It is embedded in rule systems and institutions that have already transformed state sovereignty in many ways”<sup>1</sup>.

Certain cosmopolitan norms are expressed in the EU common policies, UN initiatives against global poverty and world activities of some great NGO’s. In a recent publication by me I set out the view that mankind should take to create institutions, through which cooperative justice could be realized in the distribution of the specific goods of knowledge economy<sup>2</sup>. I mean a cooperation that is not in the field of the trade alone, „but of the production of public goods such as world peace, the prevention of damaging climate change, the guarantee of mutual aid in case of natural disasters”<sup>3</sup>. Shared use of scientific and technical achievements belongs to these goods as well.

Knowledge can be considered as a communitarian social value. World organizations, NGO’s and the global civil society as a whole could bring a certain pressure to bear in efforts to foster a democratic accessibility to goods produced by high-level science and technology.

<sup>1</sup> David Held, „Cosmopolitanism: Taming Globalization”, in *The Global Transformations Reader. An Introduction to the Globalization Debate*, David Held, Anthony Mcgrew (eds.), Polity Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 514.

<sup>2</sup> Vihren Bouzov, *Rationality, Decisions and Norms in the Globalization Era (Essays in Practical Logic)*, IVIS, Veliko Turnovo, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Philip van Parijs, „International Distributive Justice”, in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, V.II, Robert Godin, Philip Petit and Thomas Pogge (eds.), Blackwell, Oxford, 2007, p. 640.

It could be said that the attainment of a consensus ensuring such accessibility to the products of knowledge could be steady enough, if it is based on shared respect for values and is realized by people in a global community, not by individual countries only.

Other vehicles of justification of cooperative decisions-making in the field of knowledge economy and shared use of its goods are the communicative theory of J. Habermas<sup>4</sup> and the public choice theories<sup>5</sup>. Communicative action is based on moral values and rules defining the framework of a discourse – they are accepted in an intersubjective way in the holding of a free discussion.

According to the public choice theorists would be more advantageous in some situations of decision-making if an agent choose a social utility function and did not seek an individual maximization. They argue that such organic entities as “society”, “community” and “people” do not exist.

This type of individualism and nominalism could not be successful in searching for justification of collective decision.

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